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27 July 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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FROM: Bruce T. Johnson
Director of Data Processing

SUBJECT: Technology Briefing by Centronics on 9 July 1981

STAT 1. On 6 July 1981 the DIA, Mr. Larry Fitzwater, called me to tell me that the DDC, Mr. [redacted] had urged him to have someone from the Agency go to New Hampshire to look at a new printer developed by Centronics. [redacted] had also urged that we take someone from the State Department. I was asked to call Mr. Robert Howard of Centronics to inquire about the printer.

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2. On 7 July 1981 I reached Mr. Howard and he described the new printer as a high quality device with "incredible speed" (later defined as 40 to 45 characters per second but with a capability to go up to 90) which prints with a stylus floating in a magnetic field and writing through a ribbon. It has a keyboard and is therefore both an independent unit or an input/output device to be linked to computers. Character sets can be downstream loaded, Mr. Howard said, so the device could be used for "secret messages," with the character set sent to the device immediately before the message. The device can create Chinese characters or any other kind of alphabet or character set. The multi-lingual characteristics of the machine had definite interest for us, I told Mr. Howard.

STAT 3. Mr. Howard said that the device was just coming out of R&D and that it was [redacted] thought to have the Intelligence Community influence Centronics' decisions about the product line so as to ensure availability of devices tailored to Intelligence Community needs. He said he was leaving the country the following week but offered to set up a demonstration at CIA Headquarters if we would arrange a time in the next few days. I suggested Thursday afternoon, 9 July, subject to confirmation, depending on the availability of people to attend at that time.

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4. I conferred with Mr. Fitzwater and we agreed that I would invite representatives of several CIA offices and make the briefing available to NSA, DIA, and the State Department as well. I subsequently called Mr. [redacted] of NSA, who was interested and said he would send someone to the demonstration. At DIA I talked to Col. [redacted] who was also interested. At State I called Mr. Wally Francis, to be told he had retired. I was referred to Messrs. Douglas Stevens and Julian Adler, but after several phone calls it seemed schedule conflicts

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would prevent any State attendance. I then received a call from Mr. Tom Tracy who said that [redacted] had approached him while he was lunching at CIA earlier in the week and had urged him to have State look at the new Centronics technology. Mr. Tracy said he would arrange to have someone from State at the demonstration. CIA units invited included OC, Logistics/Procurement, [redacted] DDC/IMIS, and OCR.

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5. I confirmed with Mr. Howard that we could proceed with a Thursday afternoon demonstration. He said he and two colleagues would arrive at about 1400 hrs. to prepare for a 1500 hrs. session. He would need a video recorder and display screen for a short tape on Centronics and another on the new product, the "Quietwriter."

6. On Thursday, 9 July, Mr. Howard, accompanied by Mr. Robert W. Kilcullen, Vice President for Business Management, and Mr. Thomas Markley, a consultant, arrived and were escorted to room 1D35, a large conference room. While they were setting up the demonstration, my Executive Officer arranged for Mr. [redacted]

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[redacted] from OGC to review the non-disclosure form which Centronics wanted signed, the "Quietwriter" still being a product under development. A few modest changes in the agreement were made, typed in by my secretary, and reproduced so each agency representative could sign a copy. At the briefing, I signed for CIA and one of the representatives from each of the other agencies (State, NSA, and DIA) also signed for their organizations. The briefing was totally unclassified, however, and no roster of persons attending was prepared.

7. The demonstration was interesting, and the "Quietwriter" proved to be a most ingenious device. During the introductory TV tape on Centronics I discovered for the first time that Mr. Howard was the founder and Chairman of the corporation, not just a product manager as I had assumed. He and his colleagues were enthusiastic about their product and clearly were hopeful that they might stimulate enough interest to open up discussions about future product development tailored to Government needs.

8. I told Messrs. Howard and Kilcullen that CIA interest in any equipment of this kind was highly contingent upon the ability of the machine to pass TEMPEST tests for emanations security. They were uninformed about the TEMPEST program, but Mr. Howard asserted that the nature of the device suggested that any emanations would be unreadable. Mr. Kilcullen asked how to get more information about TEMPEST, and I promised to provide an address to which he could write for more information. I told him it is clearly to our advantage to have as many manufacturers as possible trying to produce non-emanating ADP devices. (I subsequently obtained from OGC/COMSEC the address at NSA where information about the Industrial Tempest Program can be requested, and on 21 or 22 July I called Mr. Kilcullen in New Hampshire. He was out, but I left the information with his secretary.)

9. After the briefing I thanked Mr. Howard for giving us the opportunity to see his new product, which could indeed be useful to this Agency. I reminded him again, however, of the importance of TEMPEST considerations in our procurement of such equipment.

/s/ Bruce T. Johnson

Bruce T. Johnson

cc: *DDA*

D/OS

OOC, Attn: 

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